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CHINESE GODS OF WEALTH

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THE CHINESE GODS OF WEALTH

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, ON 26TH MARCH, 1926

Alekseev, Vasilii Mikhailovich, 1881-1951

BY

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Published by the School of Oriental Studies in conjunction with The China Society

1928

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STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS, LTD.,
PRINTERS, HERTFORD.

29- 18305

The Chinese Gods of Wealth

THE worship of Gods of Wealth is not only one of the most interestnig of Chinese cults but is also one of those best illustrated by the popular pictures which are on sale every New Year, that being the time when special honour is paid to Gods of Wealth as well as to other gods in the Chinese pantheon. The God of Wealth is called Ts'ai Shên 財 神, of which the English rendering is an exact translation. He is not the only god called after the gift he bestows ; there are Yao Wang 藥 王 God of Healing, Huo Shên 火 神 God of Fire, Mên Shên 門 神 the Door Gods, and a host of others. Ts'ai Shên's attributes are further described by his alternative titles, of which the following are examples :— " The Wealth-Augmenting, Fortune-Increasing God of Money " 增 富 廣 運 財 神 Tsêng Fu Kuang Yün Ts'ai Shên and " The Valuable-Gathering God of Wealth " 聚 寶 財 神 Chü Pao Ts'ai Shên.

We have then to consider a sincere religious creed with its tenets frankly avowed. Men desire wealth, and here is a special god to whom they may address their prayers. As to the history of the cult, it is impossible to discuss at length the close relationship between Indian and Chinese iconography. The origins are in many instances traceable to their obvious sources. Thus, even at the present time the title of Ts'ai Shên may be applied to a wealthy man who helps others in their times of need. After his death, people outside his immediate family circle may join in the ancestor-worship performed to honour him by his direct descendants, and a public cult thus arises out of a private one. This implies, of course, that numerous persons give rise to local cults. But, since antiquity has absolute sway over even the most illiterate of Chinese minds, the half-educated members of the learned community would naturally search their memories for a notable personality to whom they might attach an established cult. And so, for reasons which it would be difficult to trace, they would deify as a Ts'ai Shên that famous hero of the Shu Ching 書 經 (Book of History), Pi Kan, who suffered unspeakable tortures at the hands of a degenerate monarch. Another instance of this curious and apparently illogical association is the cult of Kuan Ti 關 帝, commonly called by writers on China the God of War, but who is, in fact, a Wealth God and appears in many household icons with all the paraphernalia of such a

god. Like many other popular Chinese divinities such as the Kitchen God, the God of Wealth is represented as living the same kind of life as his earthly subjects live. A Ts'ai Mu 財母 or Wealth Mother is given to him as his wife, and she watches over the women's quarters.

As to the devotees of the cult of the God of Wealth, probably all China worships him except, it may be, good Christians, Mohammadans and also Europeanized Chinese who have returned to their native land hostile not only to everything that savours of religion but to what they themselves call superstition. Certainly the God is venerated by the entire rustic population which welcomes him on New Year's Eve with extravagant display of reverence. All trades are of course his special concern, and his shrine is prominent in every shop, and this is so much a matter of course that the shopkeepers of Canton, for example, do not style the God Ts'ai Shên, the Wealth God, but simply Shên, The God. In the shrine shown in Pl. 1 A, there is no image at all but simply the character Shên, 神 God, in gold on a red ground. A censer hangs before the shrine, and thus the cult is here fairly represented save for non-essential embellishments.

But apart from the commercial classes, persons of every other calling worship the God with sincere devotion, their outspoken materialism thus merging into a kind of religious mysticism. Perhaps the less honourable the calling the more devout the worshipper: certainly the most earnest of all his devotees are to be found amongst the humblest class, the enslaved women. The pictures will illustrate the manner in which the God and his associates bless their worshippers with abundance of all things. Money is their chief gift, and therefore coins, gold and silver ingots, jewels and the like are the commonest symbols represented.

But the Gods of Money are many, symbols of wealth being easily personified and deified. There is, for instance, a young genius called Liu Hai 劉海, the history of whose origin from a Taoist legend has been traced by myself in a special monograph in Russian. The symbolic iconography of Liu Hai gave rise to the worship of him as a money-giver, and to his icon were added many other desired things. In a picture displaying all the symbols of wealth and fame sometimes a boy is shown in the *rôle* of Liu Hai, thus conveying the wish that the worshipper may be blessed with male posterity. Coins are strung around his neck, while the fabulous creature known as the three-legged toad greedily devours a coin. This creature is one of the most mystic symbols of the cult, and all the legends of Chinese nurses or

half-learned *literati* fail to explain it. In some instances paired images of Liu Hai are found (Plate 4) and when he appears in the *rôle* of a door-god one picture of him is pasted on each of the double doors. Also he is depicted as a child playing with those symbols of wealth which are his attributes, thus combining good wishes for wealth and male posterity.

Other acolytes of the God of Wealth are a pair of genii called Ho Ho Êrh Hsien 和合二仙, Twin Genii of Harmony. There is great difference of opinion as to their origin, and some investigators, who do not know or wish to know Chinese, might affirm that they are divine *gemini* of the Castor and Pollux type. My own researches have not discovered any lucid text explaining their true origin, and for the time being the question must remain unsettled. But a Chinese legend may show how the idea generated in the ordinary Chinese mind. They are said to have been brothers, born of different fathers, who started a large business together and made quite a fortune. Then discord transformed them into open enemies. Seven generations came and went without ending the feud, but at last through the benevolent intervention of some supernatural being the eighth generation saw their descendants friends once more. Though no theory satisfactorily explains their true origin unless recourse is made to the unscientific method of combining my own conjectures with those from native sources, it is clear that these two genii are worshipped by the merchants, who understand the value of union and peaceful harmony in business, and the dependence of wealth upon happy partnership.

A simple example of their iconography (Plate 5) shows their smiling expression. Moreover, the two rebus-reading attributes, *ho* 荷 lotus, and *ho* 盒 box, indicate their names without the need of written characters. But such a simple representation is rarely met, and this idea of the *entente cordiale* is too abstract for Chinese popular taste in pictures intentionally crowded with the greatest number of attributes that space allows in order that poor folk may enjoy as many blessings as possible for the farthing price of a picture. And so the Ho Ho formula, though varied in many ways, is always translated in terms of money: "Harmony and Union bearing Wealth," "Harmony and Union offering Valuables, piling them up and helping to grow rich," etc. Even when not expressly mentioned, financial satisfaction is always implied: "Harmony and Union—as you like it," "Harmony and Union—all things to your satisfaction." But

by far the most frequent symbolic combination is that of money and valuables. The Ho Ho are shown standing on a floor strewn with such things, they offer money in their hands and so on. The picture may be complicated (cf. Plate 6 A) by the box held by one of the Genii. This box is half-opened and from it issues a cloud full of every symbol of riches, gold and silver ingots, pearls, jade, coins, etc., all pouring down into a basket or pan in a glowing mass. The complexity may not stop even there; for often a similar cloud issues from the mouth of another greedy presentment called a coin-dragon. In addition to coins and ingots the Ho Ho may bestow other symbols of happiness. For instance, a bat and a *shou* 壽 character, meaning long life, may be found and read rebus-like as " happiness and longevity ", thus granting whatever may be desired. The bat stands as a symbol for happiness because the word for it, *fu* 蝠, is a homophone of the word for happiness 福.

It is perhaps necessary to explain some of the symbols commonly portrayed in most of the pictures representing the cult of the God of Wealth. The " jewel-collecting pan " without doubt has its origin in some more abstract notion, and many legends are current concerning an ancient origin, but the following story was obtained in answer to questions among Chinese at the present day.

" A man of Nanking was fishing in the Yang-tzŭ River when a rough-looking pot was drawn into the net. ' Well,' said the fisherman, ' I shall use it for my dog's food.' And he gave his dog food from the pot. A strange thing happened—the food never came to an end. The fisherman's wife, coming out to see the marvel, bent over the pot and a hairpin fell in. In a moment the pot was full of golden pins. They then threw in cash and every valuable they possessed with the same result, whereupon they washed the pot and set it in the best room and began to collect money in it. They not only grew richer and richer themselves but also used the pot to help other people who came to marvel at the miracle, for which reason they were given the title ' Living Wealth Gods '."

Other strange though common symbols are the " precious horse " and the " coin-dragon ". The horse is laden with a bowl of rich jewels, and its origin may perhaps be allied with the Buddhist symbol of a horse, or more particularly that horse which carried the precious books brought back from India by the famous pilgrim Hsüan Chuang. Thus the simple expression " precious horse ", implying " book-treasure-bringing horse " has been rendered literally as a " horse with valuables ",

referring to coins and other things more tangible than the Buddhist books.

As to the "coin-dragon", it is represented as a living chain of strung coins having all the animation of the dragon proper. I do not know the origin of the symbol, but I am inclined to suspect that manipulation of the half-learned *literati* who, knowing the common association of the symbolical word for Heaven, *ch'ien* 乾, with its implied meaning of dragon, conceived the idea of combining the two in rebus form, and thus, instead of "Heavenly Dragon" or "Hidden Dragon" as is read in the first line of the *I Ching* 易經, Book of Changes, they read "Coin-Dragon". True, there is a story in a seventh-century historical document explaining the coin-dragon as a fifth-century superstition, but I doubt if this can supplant or even improve upon the hypothesis just stated.

The story says that one day an emperor of the Liang dynasty saw a great black snake coiled up with smaller snakes around it. His attendant ladies were wont to worship a black snake which they called a Coin-Dragon, referring no doubt to its elastic rings. They thought that this must be one of the same species. "So they took," says the story, "copper coins in thousands and threw them over the snake to repress its evil influence." Thus it would seem that at that period the coin-dragon had no auspicious significance.

The idea of wealth in both ancient and modern China is peculiar in that it is frequently combined with the desire for high official rank. The oppressed people, seeing how rapidly and inevitably the holding of an official position was followed by the acquisition of a fortune, regarded the two as inseparable. Hence the combination of words, *fu kuei* 富貴 wealth and rank—an expression of very ancient origin—which explains a large number of pictures representing a strange variety of good wishes for rank and honour. Of course in old China, which was at once both autocratic and democratic, the way to official honours was always open, through the medium of the literary examinations, to the whole nation, excepting only a few classes regarded as unworthy. Thus, as even the peasants could by this means attain wealth and honour without having inherited either, popular pictures deal extensively with the subject. Many formulæ of these good wishes exist, some mere repetitions like "Brilliant fame, wealth and rank" *Jung hua fu kuei* 榮華富貴, whilst others include further wishes, such as "Long life, wealth and rank" *Ch'ang ming fu kuei* 長命富貴.

The use of amulets of great variety illustrates the general tendency to outspokenness in wishing oneself good luck: "Shop opened; great luck: each and everything entirely prosperous." Or, to add to the inscription an enigmatic aspect and so concentrate the attention upon it, it might be written in fanciful style combining several characters into one compact form. The inscription in Plate 10 which is so arranged reads: "Attracting wealth; importing valuables," the reverse being a parallel to this: "Yellow gold a myriad taels." Still more outspoken is the inscription found on some pictures: "Buy the picture and grow rich," which I believe to be the pith of the whole cult.

Now, as to the religious cultivation of Ts'ai Shên, an inquiry into the features of his temples forms no part of this lecture, but some of the parallel stanzas to be seen there show the rigid way in which the half-learned people treat the deity:

"Upright and just, he holds the power of wealth;
Sage, lucid, he bestows luck and happiness."

"For the growth of wealth there is a great path.
Hundreds of fortunes—from heaven they grow."

"He is the fount of all the world's wealth and bestows on us luck and joy.
He grasps the myriads' source of fortune, ever blessing us with full abundance."

The competence of the God being such, he is cultivated, as later illustrations will prove, with an outspokenness as complete as his power over money.

Another method of treating the God merits perhaps a brief introduction. Confucian teaching propounded a theory which had more than two millennia of success. With the example before him of the founding of the Chou Dynasty in which he himself lived, Confucius demonstrated the ideal state. An ideal dynasty, says the Confucian school, must be prepared by the enlightened virtue of an individual possessing all the characteristics and qualifications of the ideal ruler and finding his inspiration in some authoritative classic which discusses human rulers and human fortunes. Thus will be founded the ideal dynasty that shall profit the founder's son, to whose lot it will fall to strike the fatal blow against the vicious ruler no longer permitted by Heaven to rule the empire.

This dualistic conception of the two-fold nature of good rule has been stereotyped by common minds as well as by the common practice of governments into the division of civil and military offices, prominence being given naturally to the former in accordance with Confucian ideals. But later history, the facts of which have never been other than a mockery of Confucian ideals, gives ample evidence that the military element has always been kinder than the civil, which most frequently consisted in sheer and atrocious exploitation. The next step was taken with the deification of brave generals such as Kuan Yü 關 羽, and thus in the heavens the distinction between the two was but a fanciful one, and moreover both are regarded as auspicious to the special needs of their worshippers when the separation into civil and military gods of wealth is made. In order that the distinction between them might be kept clear some artificial classification of the worshippers was necessary. Thus booksellers honour the civil Ts'ai Shên while blacksmiths, cutters of every kind, and all manual trades worship the military God, the latter being, as has already been suggested, none other than the deified Kuan Yü.

Before closing this lecture we must give expression to the wealth-mania in its fullest extent. This may be done by the translation of some couplets over a picture which it is not necessary to show here :—

" Money is a good fellow, round and square alternately. He will run everywhere. Have you money ? Then be glad. Without money no step can be taken. How difficult ! With ten-thousand in your pocket try hard and you may attain to any nobility, any rank. Such things are handed down from generation to generation. The rich eat and drink what they like from finest dishes with music and song, but the poor man wears his dirty shirt all his life. If you have money, fear not to go wherever you like, even to Yünnan or Kueichou. The years pass until you have a good fortune. Then you buy rank and a button for your cap and you dress in excellent furs. Then you pack up your wealth, hire satellites, armed with foreign pistols, and return home. Everyone comes to congratulate you on becoming a Ts'ai Sh'ên, and to admire you. To sum up, all other words and things are useless. The best is money—I say it most emphatically."

Such statements are generally received with prolonged pleasure, and simple folk are especially fond of pictures bearing the formula : " Truly a living Ts'ai Shên comes to our house " written in nine characters each composed of nine strokes, 眞 是 活 財 神 來 到

恒 家 (see Plate 24), and they like to fill in with ink one of these strokes every day through the eighty-one days of winter cold.

But it would be unjust to leave the subject thus. There are good and bad people in China as elsewhere, and it must not be imagined that this thirst for wealth, however marked it may be, is common to all the Chinese. No! There are people in China who despise the money-seekers, and think it their duty to caution others against that blinding vice, and who therefore spend their money on printing pamphlets which express quite different ideas on human life and its aim. In conclusion I will translate one such pamphlet :—

" The next vice [after others previously enumerated] is a passion for the venerable brother of copper, which is square inside and round outside. No matter to what class they belong, men are happy only when they have money. Look at a child! Small though he be, his eyes, when he sees a coin, are red with passion. Every house welcomes money. People smile pleasantly ; but a sword is hidden in the smile and sticks are prepared, ready to whistle through the air. A greedy mob of brigands stands by to wrest away your gains. Is there a single man in the world who realizes how deadly is the poison of money ? Then why let your heart be entangled by the hurtful thing ? Be advised then, you who have lofty aspirations, and do not run after money. Think a little of your future life ! "

The translation of a satirical pamphlet may be added :—

" The whole day he hurries about his business. Then he feels hungry. Having eaten enough he thinks of his dress. Now he has eaten enough and is well dressed. But he is not satisfied. He wants a pretty girl in the house. One is not enough, so he takes several. No, he is not pleased : there is neither chair nor carriage to wait for him. Now there are chairs and carriages and horses in plenty. But there is not enough land to bring in an adequate income. Land is bought. No—he lacks social position. Well, he buys seventh, fifth, third, first rank . . . and now he is a minister of state. But no—he wants to be the Emperor himself. Now he is the Emperor, but he is still dissatisfied with his possessions. Immortality is his next aim. The absurd idea haunts him. And what then ? A coffin with a long cover. Take your sorrows with you and ' clear off '."

And here is the antithesis : the song of him who is content :—

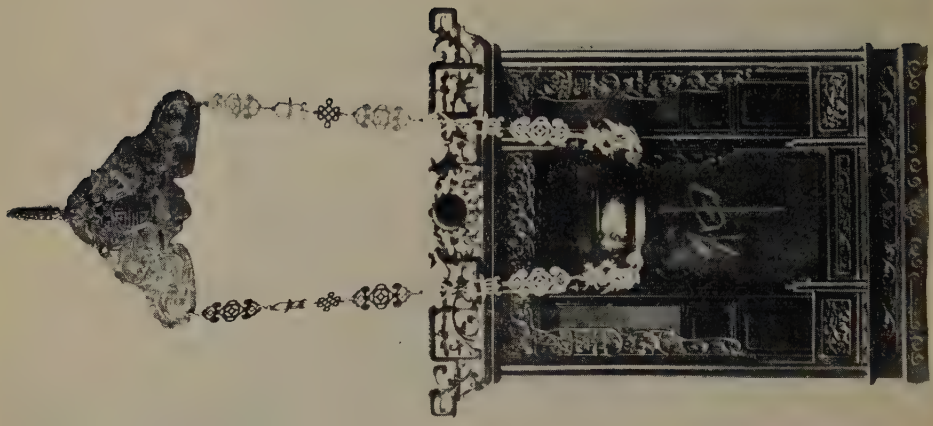
" Happiness is all man desires. The pity is that people do not know how to be content with what they have. Think a little of others who toil continuously, which you do not. That should make you

happy. Others suffer, but you are free from ills. Others are anxious, but you are quiet. Others die, you live. Some are hungry and cold, but not you. Some must walk fast with their burdens while you stroll along at your leisure. Some are not married, but you are. There are others in prison, but you suffer no persecution. Some may be stupid, but you are wise, and so on. I say you must not weep over your apparent inferiority to others. Say, ' Oh ! How many are in worse case than I.' Step aside and think, and you will understand that your good luck is no further away than your own nose."

And now to conclude : I hope that this lecture may be accepted as ethnographical only, since my observations were addressed to persons with ethnographical interests, and the subjects of the pictures belong to the same class. This terrible longing for material happiness, first and last of human desires, far from being common to the whole Chinese people, is strongly opposed by the Chün Tzŭ 君子, the " gentlemen " of the Confucian teaching, who may still be found in China. They do not buy these pictures, therefore in order to get them explained I have always had to address myself to the simple-minded rustics who are the real admirers of them. " Wealth and honour unworthily obtained are to me as a fleeting cloud," says Confucius in his *Dialogues* 論語, comparing a poor disciple with others struggling for wealth. We might of course become ironical over the way in which Chinese officials, nominal followers of Confucius, treated this saying of their Master, but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that a parallel exists in other countries where the ideal of poverty preached by the founders of religions is in no way realized by the self-styled followers of those doctrines.

The sinologist of ethnographical disposition would do well to seek some consistent facts so that he may make for himself a useful vocabulary, expressing not traditional explanations but real facts. If the religion of Ts'ai Shên be carefully studied with full documentary evidence, the very bed-rock of Chinese popular religion will become evident. Further study will prove that at heart it is a materialistic religion—a question much disputed by persons who have not studied the illuminating pictures which illustrate this lecture.

PLATE 1.



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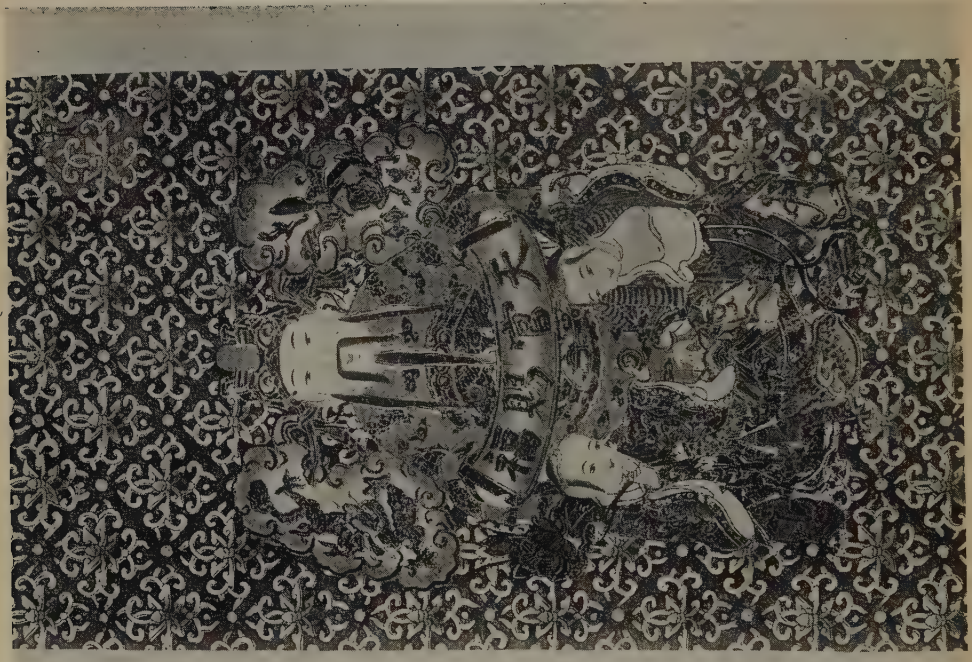


B

PLATE 1 A.—Small shrine used in the worship of the God of Wealth. Carved wood. Before the shrine hangs a bronze censer. From Canton. See p. 4.

PLATE 1 B.—Painted colour-print which represents the God of Wealth as a door-god to be pasted on a single door. He is shown in the *rôle* of Heaven's Commissary, T'ien Kuan 天官, wearing his most elaborate dress, and on the scroll in his hands is plainly written the blessing he confers. He is surrounded by various symbols of financial happiness which later plates will show more clearly.

Dominant colours green and gold ; size 20 × 12 inches.

PLATE 2 A.—Here is a simple picture showing how the promised wealth will be distributed. The God of Wealth sits in the centre in full ceremonial dress as if about to visit his superior, say the Jade Monarch 玉皇上帝 Yü Huang Shang Ti as Taoist lore would suggest. The ancient style of his dress is indicated by the cap with golden pins protruding at the sides. In his left hand is a silver ingot while the fingers of his right hand are held in a manner suggestive of Buddhist iconography. Two young assistants, always represented as wearing the ancient ceremonial dress of an official and a scholar respectively, explain themselves by means of parallel stanzas inscribed on scrolls :—

Wealth-inviting youth comes.
Shop-profiting fairy arrives.

The scholar-assistant on the left holds a writing-brush to indicate his willingness to insert the name of the worshipper on the list of those who will enjoy the God's blessing, while the official on the right of the God grasps a quaint-shaped fungus supposed to give long life to those who eat it. A young boy moves the ceremonial fan above the head of the God, and a table is set with tea for his enjoyment (a purely theatrical detail).

It is easy to discover a parallel between the Buddhist acolytes and the two genii shown in this picture, the adoptive quality of the Chinese mind being clearly manifest. The distribution of wealth is indicated by three large silver ingots, two coral branches, and a piece of green jade which is valued highly and used for making rings and other ornaments. Copper cash are shown of course, the people being more accustomed to their use than to the enjoyment of the other gifts of the God. Instead of the usual chronological inscription, the coin in the foreground bears the following sentence which throws light upon the whole question of the cult of the God of Wealth : " Money can lead to godhead," i.e. can transform a man into a god. Thus, if a man use his money for the benefit of those who have none they will venerate him as a God of Wealth. The inscription above the picture shows its value to be quite out of proportion to the farthing which it costs : " The God of Wealth coming down from the Nine Empyreans. Gold and silver heaped to form mountains. The man who buys this picture grows rich for a myriad myriad years."

Painted colour-print ; size 23 × 13½ inches.

PLATE 2 B.—This illustration shows simple images of the Precious Horse and the Coin-Dragon and a child making a gesture of good wishes with a coral branch in his hand.

Painted wood-cut ; size 23½ × 14 inches.

A

B

PLATE 3.

PLATE 3.—A mixed icon shows the place which the God holds in the household pantheon. A Kuan Yin 觀音—Boddhisatva—with her acolytes and attributes presides over the whole, Buddhist iconography thus maintaining its predominance. Below Kuan Yin are seen the Niang Niang 娘娘 or Mothers and their attendants, having each her special power to heal sick children, and last but not least, are shown large figures of Kuan Ti 關帝 with Yao Wang 藥王 God of Healing and Ts'ai Shên 財神 God of Wealth on either side. A bowl filled with fine jewels and corals glows conspicuously in the foreground. Ts'ai Shên thus appears as one of the best known and most needed deities.

Painting; size 31 × 25 inches.

PLATE 4.—Paired images of Liu Hai in the *rôle* of a door-god to be pasted on double doors.

The mottoes are :—

Wealth-inviting youth comes.
Shop-profiting fairy arrives.

Compare Plate 2 A.

Painted colour-print ; size of each 15 × 12 inches.

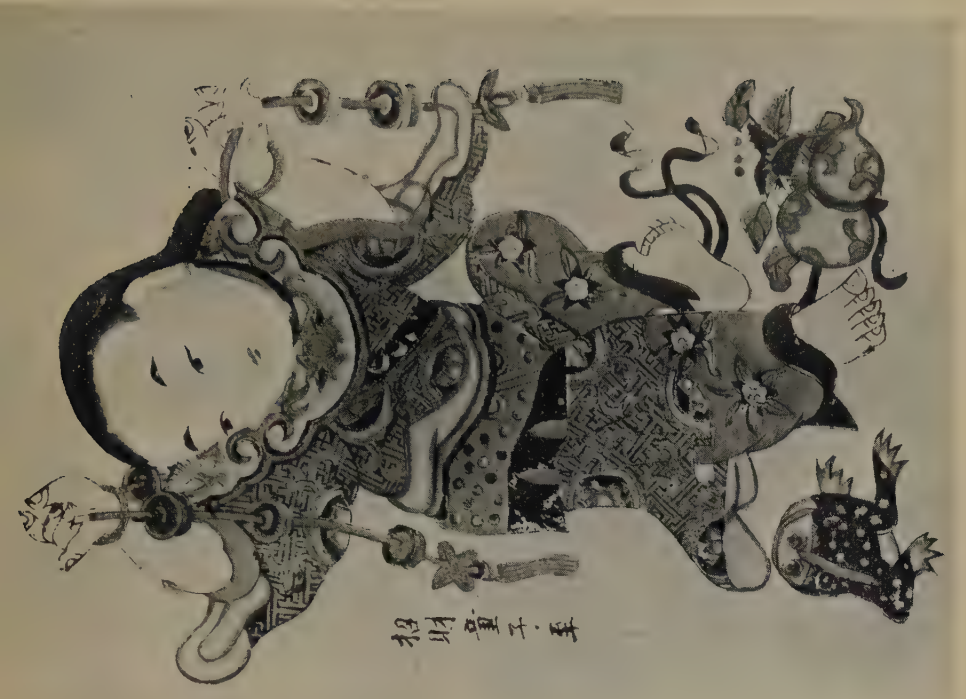


PLATE 5.

PLATE 5.—In addition to coins and ingots the Ho Ho may bestow other symbols of happiness. For instance, a bat and a *shou* character meaning long life may be found and read rebus-like as " happiness and longevity ", thus reinforcing the characters inscribed at the top of the print. Another rebus is represented by the lotus (*ho*) and the box (*ho*).

Painted colour-print.

PLATE 6 A.—This picture shows the Ho Ho, the Twin Genii of Harmony, with Liu Hai, who is represented twice in close assimilation to the Ho Ho, thus further complicating the picture. Two *actors* are here playing the *rôles* of the Ho Ho, offering to the worshipper a "jewel-collecting bowl". Two hands being thus occupied, the other two offer the symbol of harmony and a "money-shaking tree". Two boys play the doubled *rôle* of Liu Hai with his dishevelled hair and his three-legged toad. Clouds issue from both the mouth of the toad and a half-opened box. In the clouds are seen a "money-mountain", a "precious horse", a "coin-dragon", ingots, and other symbols of wealth, while the floor is strewn with pearls and jewels.

Painted colour-print; size 24 × 14 inches.

PLATE 6 B.—Perhaps a more usual group is the one shown in Plate 6 B. Here the small actors are seen developing the toad legend, enticing it to bite the coin. One Ho (the other having lost his in the play with Liu Hai) holds his normal symbol—the lotus. The inscription is only a stereotyped formula for part of the scene, "Liu Hai playing with his toad" 劉海戲金蟬 *Liu Hai hsi chin chan.* Coins and ingots complete the picture.

Painted colour-print; size 24 × 14 inches.

A

B

PLATE 7.—Returning to simpler forms after a plethora of the symbols of wealth, here is a rude but forceful picture of the God of Horses and Cows riding in a cart drawn by a curious but well-known team consisting of a horse, an ox, a donkey, and a mule. The God is seated on a lump of silver—a hard cushion. The inscriptions at his sides are not of the usual parallel form but read thus: "Daily grow with gold in bushels. Cows and horses be in peace." This picture is probably the simplest of all those designed to appeal directly to the country-folk. Rough as it is, it is a curious example of popular colour-prints.

Colour-print; size 13 × 9 inches.

PLATE 8.—The idea of plentiful male posterity is next included among the gifts of the Wealth Gods. The Ho Ho and Liu Hai are not needed here, their places being taken by children forming a group of five in accordance with the lucky formula " (May you have) five children to dispute the leadership (in passing examinations) ". The profusion of symbols seen in other pictures is absent from this, the animation of the scene being sustained by the small actors themselves. The inscription is merely a generality: " Greatly develop the fountain of wealth."

Painted colour-print; size $42 \times 23\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

大發
源財

PLATE 9.

PLATE 9.—This crowded picture presents to the worshipper all possible images and symbols of rank and fortune. A wealthy home is filled with very distinguished people, including a young candidate placed first on the list of all who have presented themselves for examination at the Emperor's palace. In full ceremonial dress he is seated on a white horse to be admired of all beholders. His little son, playing his father's *rôle*, is shown standing on the back of a monstrous tortoise thus representing a rebus which reads, "The only one seizing the monster's head." Now, the monster being of cosmic importance, the rebus further implies, "Be first in the world." His gesticulation is supposed to illustrate the idea of "that momentous step in the heavens over the black clouds" made by a successful candidate who is shown the way by a spirit who resides in the home of the Great Bushel. The sign of the Bushel is in his left hand, the right holding the symbol of his future fame—the writing-brush. These are the traditional attributes of Kuei Hsing, and the pose is that in which he is generally represented. Living "wealth gods", the masters of the house, display their rich symbols, the most conspicuous being a great basket filled with cash and jewels whose brilliance glows up to heaven whence unseen wealth gods descend to meet the living ones. The inscription describes the scene very simply:—

> "First place attained; monster's head seized. Rank added, salary too—then a marquis made. Gods of Riches offer treasures, piling jade in heaps; Heaven's Deputy bestows luck for myriad, myriad years."

Painted colour-print; size 43 × 24½ inches.

PLATE 10.—A coin-shaped amulet with an inscription written in fanciful style combining several characters into one compact form, which reads: "Attracting wealth; imparting valuables." The reverse is a parallel: "Yellow gold and myriad taels."

On the obverse, the character at the top is 福, happiness, and that on the reverse is 壽, longevity.

Reverse.

Obverse.

PLATE 11.

A

B

PLATE 11 A shows a man kneeling and bowing before an altar on which are displayed printed paper images of the "hundred" gods and all the usual accompaniments of a fire-burning sacrifice. While the master of the house is thus engaged, his whole household is busy beating drums and gongs, all bent on making as much noise as possible to attract the attention of the God. This picture shows an unusually expressive treatment of the subject. The inscription runs simply: "Feasting and glorifying the God of Wealth."

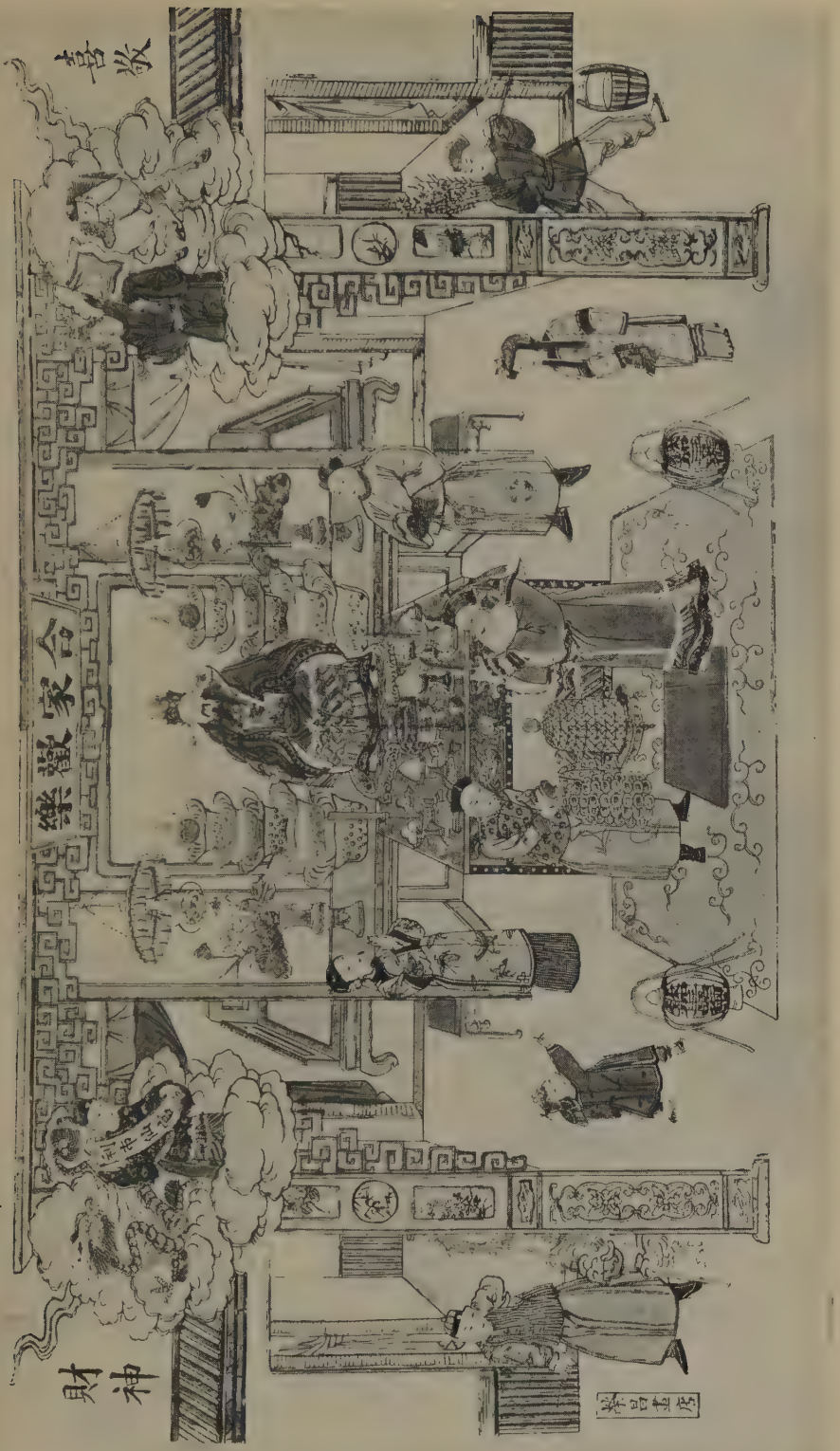
Painted colour-print; size $21\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ inches.

PLATE 11 B.—Devotion to the worship of the Wealth God is shown in this picture of an old man in ceremonial dress bowing in prayer before the God. His son's wife strikes the bowl, and incense and paper money are burned while crackers are fired outside the door. Such pictures are simplicity itself. They are selected to show the elements of the cult, so that it may stand out clearly from the wealth of detail found in other pictures.

Painted colour-print; size $23\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ inches.

PLATE 12.—The descent brought about by the spell of the pictures is here being performed. A statue of Ts'ai Shên is worshipped inside a richly decorated shrine. Beside him on either hand stand piles of enormous gold and silver ingots. The altar is covered with the usual offerings—wine, fruit, and cakes—for the enjoyment of the God. Paper money is burned and crackers fired, and thus everything below is prepared for the arrival of those from above. And then they appear, the acolytes of the God of Wealth, riding on the clouds and bringing with them a Coin-Dragon and a Treasure-Horse. "The whole house is full of joy," says the inscription above the shrine, while the title of the picture explains that "this is how the God of Wealth is joyfully worshipped".

Painted colour-print; size 42 × 25 inches.


財神
合家歡樂

滿堂會十

PLATE 13.—A glimpse is vouchsafed to the worshipper of the preparations being made in heaven for a visit to his house. The God, mounted on a white horse, is about to leave heaven accompanied by a group of nine attendants, two of whom carry his royal insignia while the others are laden with valuables destined for the use of the waiting worshipper. Although the purpose of the picture is perfectly clear, its inscription shows that the artist did not think much about it, or if he did, was only anxious to add a new inscription, for it reads : "Thousands of granaries filled to bursting."

Painted colour-print ; size 23 × 14 inches.

PLATE 14.—Here is the arrival of the God of Wealth at a wealthy home where he is awaited by the world's literary champion 狀元 (1) and his wife (2) dressed in their best and standing before an altar on which are images of the Luck-Increasing God of Wealth (3) and the Money-Collecting God of Wealth (4). The Living God of Wealth himself (11) stands invisible upon a cloud holding a Precious Horse, from whose mouth pours down in a cloudy stream jade, silver coins, and other valuables. A wealth-gathering pan (8) glows in the centre of the room, and beside the door stands a large basket placed there so that there may be no doubt that this is really the house for which the poured-down wealth is destined. Great preparations are being made in the house to welcome the God. One boy (10) is carrying golden flowers of the kind used for Buddhist shrines, another (13) has a broom in his hand to sweep the floor before the arrival of the exalted guest, while a third (14) is lighting crackers to ward off demons. A carp (15) is being prepared for cooking to symbolize abundance, the word *yü* 魚 fish being a homonym for another *yü* 餘 abundance. Inscriptions commemorating the event or expressing exaggerated good wishes meet the eye everywhere. "Attract wealth," says one. "Bring valuables," says another, and the parallel stanzas on the doors run :

> "Increasing luck grows in this wealthy place.
> Golden heaps collected in this jade abode."

> "Daily advance the thousand regions' jewels,
> Ever attracting wealth from myriad miles."

In addition to those closely connected with the God of Wealth, there are many other symbols of good luck, which read as rebuses, as well as other details of the festival. But it is unnecessary to enlarge further upon the subject and it may suffice to add that the amalgamation of the visible world with the unseen, and the combination of great wealth with the highest literary and official attainments is complete.

Painted colour-print ; size 42 × 24 inches.

午新過第及元狀

PLATE 15.—The visit of the God of Wealth to the women's quarters, where every sign of wealth is evident, presents a gay scene. Followed by a fan-bearer, he descends upon the clouds, while outside the door of the house another attendant tethers a "precious horse" laden with jewels beneath a "money-shaking tree". On a golden mountain 金山 is coiled a silver dragon 銀龍 and the floor is strewn with cash and ingots. A cock about to crow is to be read as "Cock crows" or, more fully, in rebus form combined with other symbols lying near as "Merit, fame, wealth, and glory". "A roomful of wealth and glory," says the title of the picture and the event is described by a rustic quatrain :

"Golden cock at fifth watch crowing ;
Magpie herald before the door.
Everywhere yellow gold appearing.
Surely a lucky god arrives."

Painted colour-print ; size 43 × 24 inches.

PLATE 16.—The title of this picture reads, "How the God of Wealth, knocking at our door, comes down to our house", where he is awaited in order that he may be seated at his own altar. The splendidly dressed company has just concluded a sacrificial ceremony which from the character of it would have been appropriate to the worship of a "house Buddha". Two servants carry silk-covered lanterns. The inscription on the picture is, "May you obtain whatever you like in the Nine Heavens," 九天如意 *Chiu T'ien ju i.* An old man in the court dress of an official is just setting out with his sons and grandsons to meet the God, who is on the point of arriving followed by his usual suite, including Liu Hai playing with his toad, the Twin Genii of Harmony, a "Wealth-attracting youth" and a young "Shop-benefactor". The famous box of plenty in the hands of one of the Ho Ho is half opened and heaps of treasures are flying straight into the wealth-basket at the door of the shrine.

Painted colour-print; size 41 × 24 inches.

Other pictures show the God calling alone at the house, his attendants remaining in the clouds at the top of the picture.

PLATE 16.

PLATE 17.

PLATE 17.—The two types of Wealth God are here represented seated side by side in a shrine. In addition to the usual theatrical distinction of garments and headgear, the one being a fiercely painted military god and the other a smooth and genial-looking mandarin, other emblems distinguish the two, such as the coral branch in the hands of the military god and the silver ingot held by the civilian. The Ho Ho are simulating great effort to throw down their burden of wealth to the worshipper. Both are gorgeously dressed in ancient costumes, and bear the signs of their immortality, and burning at their foreheads are jewels appropriate to their position beside the Gods of Wealth. The *rôle* of Liu Hai is played by a lad carrying in a pan the jewels which have been collected. Near him a toad plays with a glowing coin and a coin-tailed dragon creeps along in his usual beneficent attitude. The frame of the picture is composed of cash and ingots standing one above the other in a kind of symmetry. Other symbols are displayed above the top of the curtain, on which are inscribed the words: "Civil and Military Gods of Wealth." Such a picture should prove satisfactory whatever the profession of the purchaser, and should his household include members of some trades worshipping the military God and some of those worshipping the civil God it is a bargain indeed.

Painted colour-print; size 23 × 14 inches.

Now a theatrical arrangement of a play shown as a religious subject requires imperatively that its historical content should be expressed in just such symbols and groups as were seen in the preceding picture. The anthropomorphic trend of Chinese popular religion demands such treatment. Then the half-learned *literati*, from their rich chrestomathies and historical records would select names which might easily fill the *rôles*. Thus, for instance, a civilian God of Wealth might be identified with the famous Mecenas of the third century A.D. who outshone all others in feasting men of talent and had a great reputation both for learning and wealth.

As to the Military God, many names are forthcoming and Kuo Tzŭ-i, a famous general of the eighth century A.D., is selected, being renowned alike for morals and filial piety, so that in this way a picture may combine a high standard of morals with an historical fable and the image of Ts'ai Shên.

PLATE 18 shows both these historical Ts'ai Shên seated on their thrones in the midst of their numerous offspring with every possible symbol of honour and wealth surrounding them. "Merit and Fame that covered the world," is the description of the general in his new *rôle* of Ts'ai Shên, and the simple verse goes on :—

"Centuries old wonderful noble came from Fên Yang
The world's rare peerless one, pride of all the earth,
High merits of mind and soul—perfect as knight and son,
Name glowing life-long is light for a myriad years."

The wealthy Mecenas is similarly described in the title: "Inexhaustible wealth and honour" and in verse also :—

"Unlimited precious jade came to our Chi Lun,
Living in poverty he still had a money-filled bowl.
Rich, he had hills of gold and the coin-shaking tree.
Famous is he among men—a first-rank noble."

Painted colour-print ; size 41 × 24 inches.

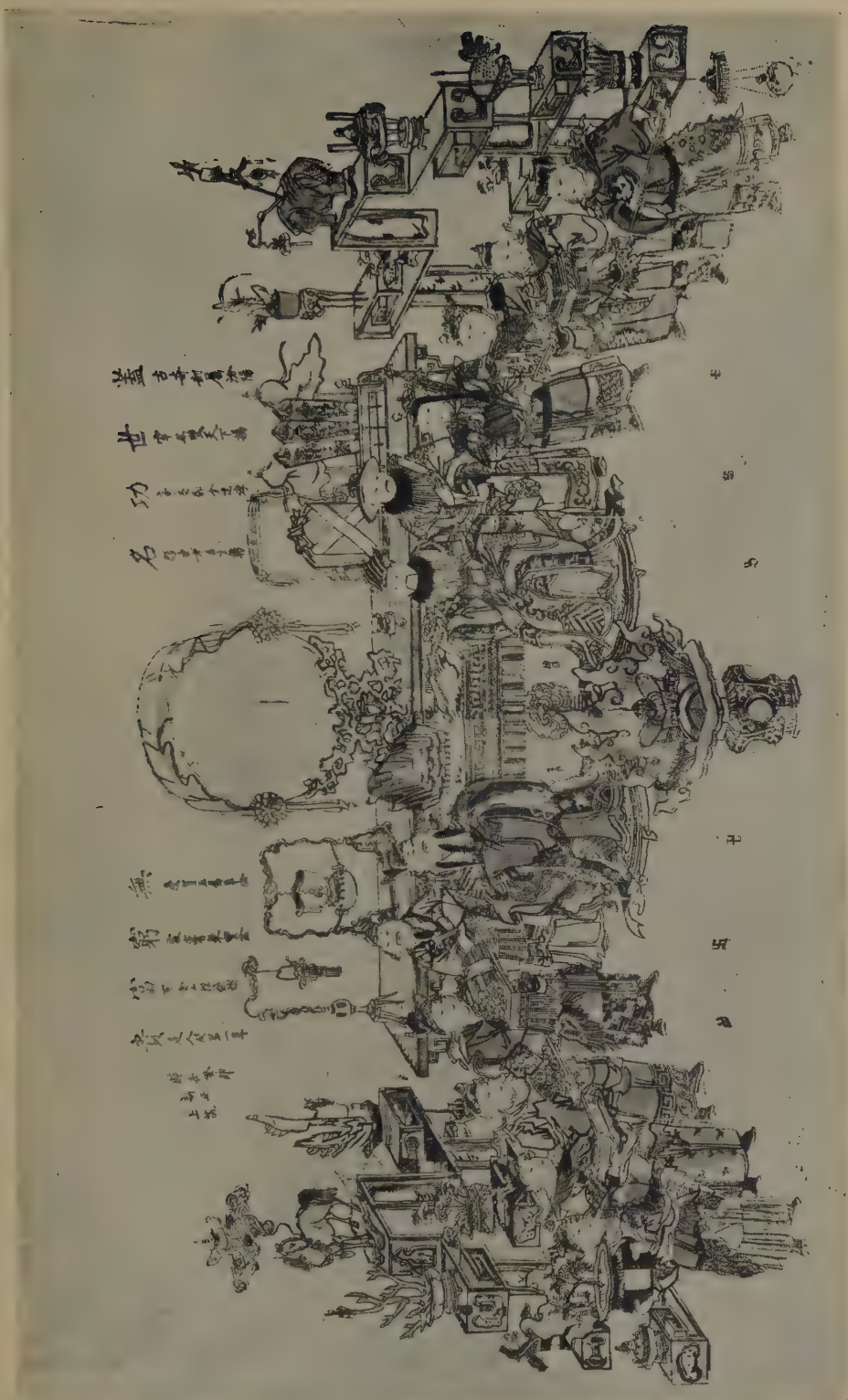
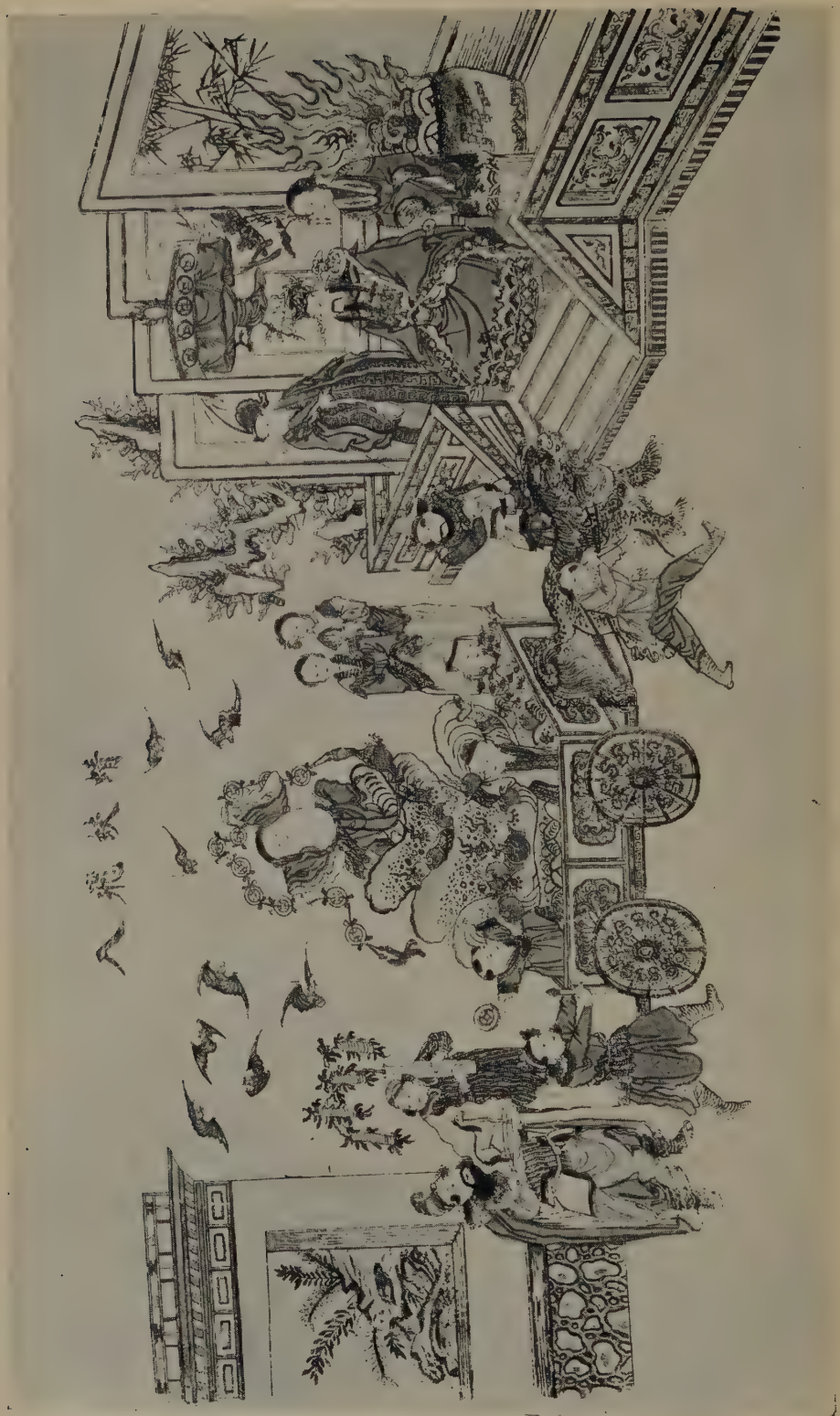


PLATE 19.



Some explanation must now be given of a figure which has already appeared in a number of pictures but has been left unnoticed in order not to complicate the subject before the right moment. In her historical struggles with her neighbours or at peace with them, China knew them not only as troublesome enemies, but also as tributary sources of her wealth. Korea brought the famous restorative, ginseng, Annam contributed ivory, while pearls and coral came from India through the Turkish and other nomadic peoples of Central Asia. These latter have proved a good subject for popular pictures and Plate 19 represents the Turkish Ts'ai Shên as a very foreign- (or fierce-) looking personage, the mighty contributor of every attractive symbol of foreign importation. The God is paying a visit to the guest and master of the house, the civil God of Wealth, and he brings with him all his untold riches. Liu Hai is an actor dancing over an enormous ingot in a cart drawn by a lion. Bats fly about as a reminder of the fact that if the blood of these creatures be sprinkled on the coins they will return even if already spent.

Painted colour-print; size 42 × 25 inches.

PLATE 20.—The foreign Ts'ai Shên reappears in this picture before the domestic Wealth Gods who are seated amidst an immense collection of every kind of wealth, thus wishing the worshipper riches for ever and ever. This time the foreign God is himself laden with part of his contribution and the remainder is carried by a horse.

Painted colour-print ; size 42 × 25 inches.

文武財神

PLATE 21.

PLATE 21.—A third picture shows the Turkish God coming to associate himself with the Civil and Military Gods of Wealth who have arrived earlier and are being entertained by the master of the house in familiar fashion. They start a finger game in which the loser pays forfeit by drinking when he fails to guess correctly the total number of fingers held up on both sides. The Master of the house is named Wan Nien Fa 萬 年 發, Myriad Years Prosperous, and his associate is Chin Tou Chin 進 斗 金, Growing by bushels of Gold. Thus the wealth-giving picture is complete even to the likeness of the worshipper himself. With the two figures beside the Gods of Wealth compare those on Plates 2 A, 4, and 24, where the same mottoes appear on the scrolls held by the figures.

Painted colour-print; size 42 × 25 inches.

PLATE 22.—It is evident from the earlier pictures that a Ts'ai Shên is rarely shown alone and without any other symbol of good wishes to the owner of the picture. This picture shows the God bringing the gift of long life, the title being "The Ts'ai Shên bless you with long life". They bring with them a peach, symbol of longevity. A son destined for high official dignity is added to the other good portents. The unseen world is shown in two parts as suiting two different purposes.

Painted colour-print; size 42 × 25 inches.

PLATE 23.

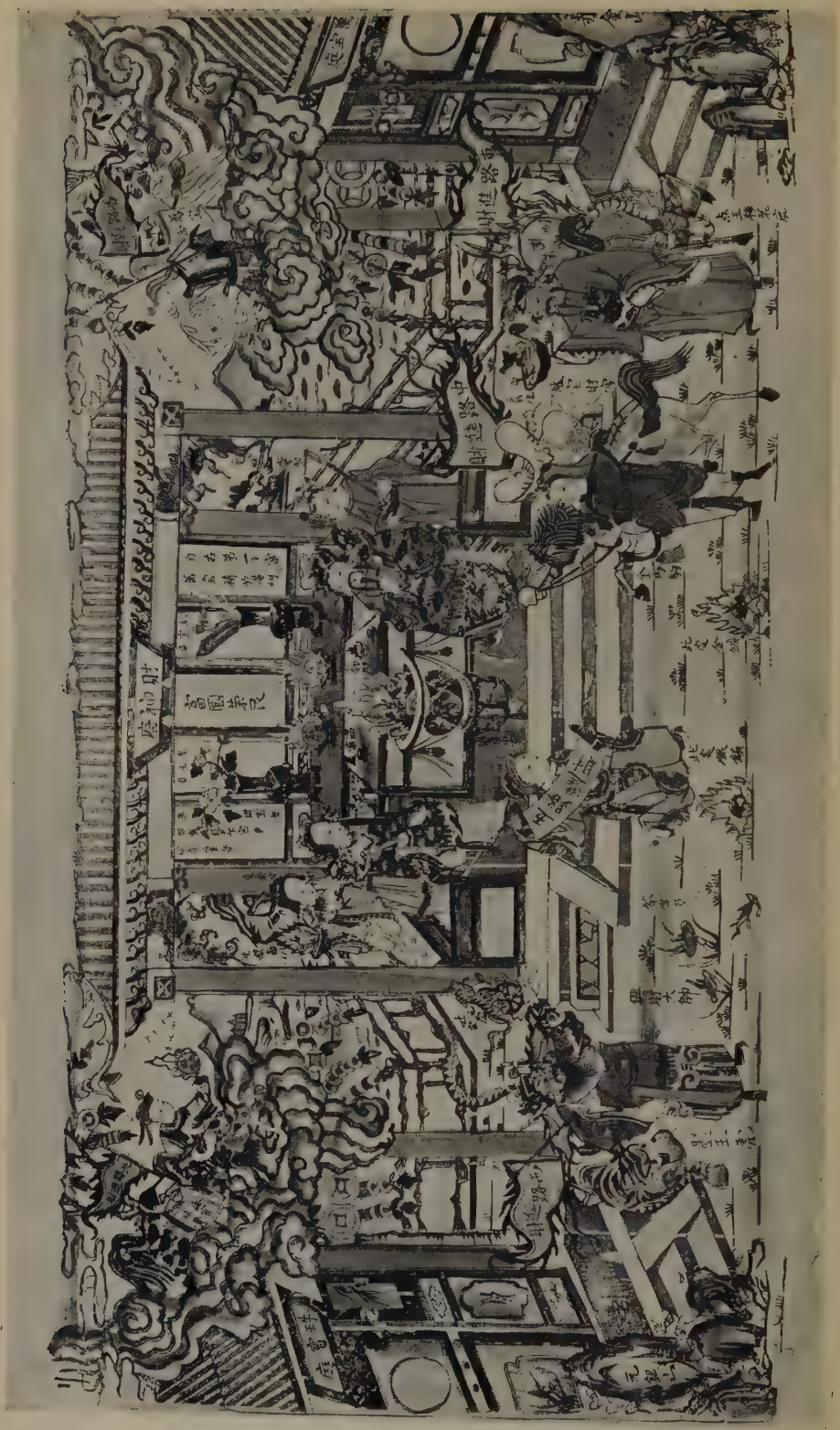


PLATE 23.—We come now to the illustration of those formulæ of wealth and easy gain so often referred to already. Here, for instance, is an illustration of the formula "Five roads (i.e. the four cardinal points together with the abode of the worshipper forming the central point) bring wealth". A living Ts'ai Shên, who is really the worshipper himself, is waiting with his wife to welcome those who come with their magnificent display of gifts from all parts of the world.

Painted colour-print; size 43 × 25 inches.

PLATE 24.—Still more frequent are those pictures which represent a sort of incarnation of the Ts'ai Shên, who, in the person of the owner of the picture, is returning home after the conclusion of a successful bargain. He is met by the whole of his household who watch the glowing wealth being borne in by sturdy porters. A celestial parallel to the earthly scene is portrayed amid the clouds in the upper part of the picture. Here the God himself appears with his satellites and the paraphernalia of wealth.

In a similar picture there is inscribed a rhyming verse to this effect:—

"The Merchant flourishes according to his own desires;
The Wealth-God, luck-giving, comes to the very doors.
The whole house is joyful and merry, every portent is good—
Wealth, rank, luck, and best of all, long, long life."

Painted colour-print; size 43 × 26 inches.

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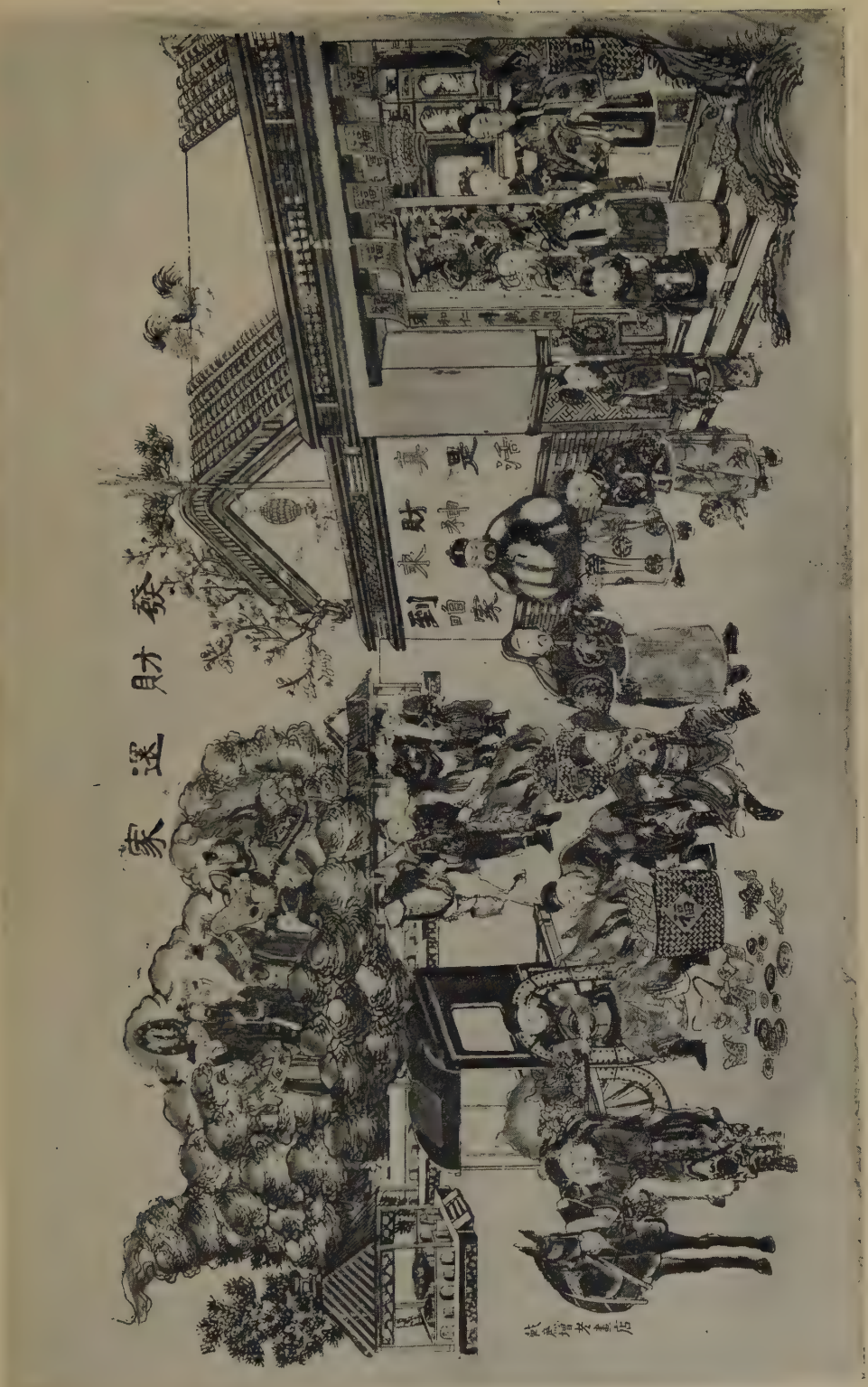
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Alekseev, Vasiliĭ Mikhaĭlovich, 1881–1951.

The Chinese gods of wealth; a lecture delivered at the School of Oriental studies, University of London, on 26th March, 1926, by Basil M. Alexéiev ... [London] Pub. by the School of Oriental studies in conjunction with the China society, 1928.

36 p. 24 pl. (part. col.) 25 cm.

1. Art, Chinese. 2. China—Religion. 3. Cultus, Chinese. I. London. University. School of Oriental and African studies. II. China society, London. III. Title.

29-18305

Library of Congress N7340.A5

[a44r34g1] CCSC/sk 709.51

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